**Five Crucial Questions for President Biden**

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For presidents who are not prepared to disregard truth, fact and reality, press conferences are potential nightmares. That may be one reason why President Joe Biden has been reluctant to subject himself to only occasional formal sessions with the media. But the public still needs to understand how the president and his administration will respond to certain crucial questions. Here are five.

Age will play heavily in the 2024 presidential elections. However, possibly overshadowing age is the fitness of Kamala Harris to assume the presidency. A random sampling of her public statements is, at best, troubling.

Many are rambling, inchoate, circular and filled with non-sequiturs. As disquieting is the vice president’s proclivity to pepper her comments with giggles and laughter more appropriate for a young teenager. How does the president convince the electorate that Ms Harris is indeed ready to assume his duties in an emergency or crisis?

The US Congress has appropriated about five trillion dollars in the American Rescue Plan; Infrastructure; Chips and Science; and Inflation Reduction Acts. Given the obscene amounts of waste, fraud and abuse as well as what has been unspent in the distribution of Covid monies measured in hundreds of billions of dollars, how will the president assure the public that these failures will not be repeated? What are the oversight and management procedures to ensure the money will be well spent; achieve its purposes; give Congress a role in this process; and establish responsibility and culpability?

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Currently, there are none. Assigning cabinet officers sole responsibility is unsatisfactory. Each has a much broader portfolio. Designating White House oversight duties will not provide the necessary staff for follow-up. What is the president’s response to these questions?

The president’s foreign policy is stated as for the middle class. But what about those Americans who do not fall into this category on both ends? Why is policy not designed for America rather than for a specific group?

Further, what does a foreign policy for the middle class achieve that a broader one to advance American interests does not? More critically, how does this policy reflect an unprecedented period for national security? For the first time in history, the US concurrently faces two adversarial superpowers: Russia with its nuclear weapons and vast energy resources and China with its huge economy and growing military strength.

It is not clear that Biden’s foreign policy has addressed this geostrategic tectonic shift in terms of a “no limits” partnership, instead maintaining separate and uncoordinated policies for China and Russia. Likewise, how does the war in Ukraine affect and is affected by Sino-Russo cooperation? Aside from promising to support Ukraine “for as long as it takes,” a magnificently ambiguous commitment, what is the US strategy for resolving that war and what are the objectives to be met? These remain unanswered questions.

Conceivably, President Biden could confront a Ford-Nixon moment over a presidential pardon. Suppose further indictments of Donald Trump lead to criminal trials beyond the one scheduled for March 2024. Trump has so far lost a civil case for harassment and a five million dollar suit. Interfering in the 2020 election and provoking the January 6th riots are non-trivial. Ignoring the Presidential Records Act and possible obstruction of justice regarding the unauthorized possession of potentially highly classified documents could lead to serious jail time for lesser individuals.

If Trump is convicted on any of these charges, especially the last three, what would Biden do about a potential pardon? Action and inaction would both provoke a huge backlash. And any decision could have a powerful influence on the 2024 election if it were a replay of 2020.

Finally, President Biden campaigned on the promise to bring the country together and close the rifts dividing both parties and the public on virtually every issue from abortion to zoonotic causes of Covid-19. That has not happened. So what is he proposing to do that he was unable to accomplish in his first term?

For the moment, politics are being held hostage by the debt ceiling crisis. A resolution must be the first-order priority. While a rational government would never find itself in this position, rationality is light years away from describing how both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue work or in this case may not work.

If a debt ceiling crisis is not avoided, then perhaps the overriding question for the president and the Speaker of the House is how did this happen. But do not expect any good answers there either.

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